

Mola Mola – Bali Sunfish

By Maxine

There is an advertisement for the teaching profession that airs in the UK where a student asks, 'Is it possible to cry underwater?' The answer to that question is yes.....as long as you're wearing a mask! Okay, I'll back up a bit, I wasn't sobbing hysterically beneath the ocean waves or anything embarrassing like that but my eyes were certainly misty when I caught site of my very first Sunfish.

I blame my buddy who dived Nusa Penida the day before only to return home disappointed after failing to find any Sunfish. My philosophy, the day I dived was to not build my hopes up, after all it was the middle of October and not really the height of 'Mola Mola season'; I would just do three great dives on Nusa Penida and enjoy the other marine life that this incredible diving destination had to offer.

My group onboard were from Malaysia and an absolute riot, they obviously dived frequently and had a lot of fun together – they were definitely in the mood on this particular morning as every time there was a ripple in the water, one of them would yell 'Mola Mola' and then start laughing, you couldn't help but get caught up in their enthusiasm.

After forty five minutes of bobbing through Bali's turquoise waters, we arrived at [Crystal Bay](#), a popular vacation retreat for Mola Molas. I geared up in my 5mm wetsuit as I knew this area could be chilly, however, nothing prepared me for the icy waters that hit my head as I gently rolled back in to the ocean, wow! After my initial shock I acknowledged my Instructor Putu as he signaled for us to slowly descend. My group slowly headed towards the wall and I immediately spotted a very nice nudibranch, some lion fish and a scorpion fish; I continued studying the reef when the sound of a tank rapper disturbed me – Putu! Surely there was only one thing he would tap for today, he couldn't be so cruel as to build up my hopes and show me a turtle? (Something I would usually be thrilled about!) I finned in his direction and gasped as I looked out in to the blue and saw two beautiful Sunfish, (how my regulator never fell out of my mouth, I'll never know!)

It was at this point where my eyes started to water, whether it was with relief that I would not go home disappointed or the absolute joy of seeing these strange looking creatures, I don't know, one thing is for sure though; I didn't want to miss a single second of this experience. Putu came across and shook my hand to congratulate me on my first ever [Bali Mola Mola](#) sighting, we then gently held on to the reef to watch intently as the Mola Molas enjoyed their Balinese Spa treatment. The cleaner fish were certainly busy, pecking away at the Mola Molas parasites and soothing their irritation in the process, the distinguished yellow and black markings of a Moorish Idol going in and out of their mouths ensuring that the job was thoroughly done. I must have watched for about fifteen minutes, thinking that I may never repeat this experience and ignoring the cold that was now beginning to make me shiver; Putu eventually signaled to all of us that we needed to start ascending.

On the surface I tried to talk to one of the Malaysians in my group but I couldn't really understand what he was trying to say to me, he spoke English very well but his teeth were chattering so hard that his conversation was ineligibile. Back onboard I made him a hot drink and put a dry towel around his shoulders, only to notice he was wearing a 2mm wetsuit! The dancing onboard warmed him up though as my happy group of Malaysians partyied, singing with euphoria at having seen two Mola Molas; nobody caring too much about the second dive as in our eyes the day was complete.

Well call us spoiled if you like, but the Balinese Gods were truly shining on us that day – yep, we saw two more Mola Molas on our second dive!!! Just as beautiful and just as memorable as the first two!